

*With the facts, we can all make informed decisions about our health.*

### A General Discussion Guide About the COVID-19 Vaccines:

- The COVID-19 vaccines continue to be the best way to protect ourselves, our families and our communities from this dangerous virus.
- As of October 25, New York State has administered over 26.6 million vaccine doses – meaning millions of New Yorkers, and even more Americans nationwide, have safely gotten vaccinated.
- The vaccines are safe, effective and highly recommended for all eligible New Yorkers 12 years and older, because the real danger lies in severe risks of being unvaccinated – including hospitalization, intubation and even death.
- Yet there is still a mistrust of government driving mistrust in the vaccine.
- The entire pandemic has felt like a science-fiction movie. With shutdowns, masking and drastic changes to life as we all knew it – it's been a very challenging time.
- So it's only natural that there has been a lot of skepticism around the approval of the vaccine and a lot of information online about it – not all of it good.
- The vaccines are not a government conspiracy. In fact, they were informed by years of research, developed by the world's best scientists and approved by the nation and state's most trusted medical and health experts. These are people who dedicate their life to public health, *not* politics.
- There are many **real** factors that allowed the COVID-19 vaccines to be developed quickly and safely.
- For one, researchers got a head start on developing the vaccines because the virus that causes COVID-19 is similar to other existing viruses that have been extensively studied for many years.
- Vaccines have always been the backbone of our good health. They have always saved lives.
- Thanks to vaccines, we don't have to worry about so many harmful diseases. That's why childhood immunizations are so important.
- The COVID-19 vaccines are no different. They are our greatest protection against the virus – and they are saving lives and preventing severe outcomes caused by COVID-19 every day. All of the research continues to come up with the same conclusions.
- Mis and disinformation—caused by bad actors who purposefully mislead to cause harm—can spread just as fast as the virus.
- The reality is, people who are unvaccinated have the greatest risk of becoming seriously ill.
- That's why our best federal and state health experts, like the New York State Department of Health, urge all eligible New Yorkers to get vaccinated as soon as possible.
- This includes all eligible adults, New Yorkers ages 12-17, pregnant New Yorkers and soon-to-be pregnant New Yorkers.
- It is especially important for pregnant people to get vaccinated – because your immune system is weakened, so you are already at increased risk of severe disease.

- In fact, the CDC reported that **97%** of pregnant people hospitalized with COVID-19 in the U.S. were unvaccinated.
- Health care providers, doctors and maternal health care providers statewide are urging pregnant people to get the vaccine, because it is the best way to protect yourself and your baby.
- Everyone needs to get vaccinated as soon as they can, and we encourage all eligible New Yorkers to get vaccinated so they can protect themselves against the virus, including hospitalization and death.

Thank you. Please get your vaccine. Do it for yourself, your family, your friends, and your community.

***It's OK to have questions, and that's why we want to make sure you have the information you need to get good answers.***

### Frequently Asked Questions:

**Question: How was the vaccine developed so quickly?**

**Answer: The speed at which the vaccines were developed is a reflection of the priority the best scientists, medical experts and the world put on finding a way to combat the virus.**

There are many factors that combined to allow the COVID-19 vaccine to be developed quickly and safely:

- Researchers got a head start on developing a vaccine because the virus that causes COVID-19 is similar to other existing viruses that have been studied extensively in the past decade.
- Research about the new virus was shared almost immediately with scientists all over the world, which allowed work to begin on a vaccine right away.
- Some researchers were able to run [phase one and two trials at the same time](#).
- The studies on COVID-19 included a larger number of people than other recent vaccine trials, meaning there were a larger number of people in the trials over a shorter period of time.
- The federal government allowed manufacturing of the most promising vaccines to begin while the studies were ongoing. That means that when it was authorized it could be offered to the public almost immediately.

It's important to note that all vaccine developers are required to go through each stage of the development process and meet all safety and efficacy (how well something works) standards. Learn about the many steps in the typical [vaccine testing and approval process](#).

**Question: Should I be worried about the vaccine's side effects?**

**Answer: It is normal for your body to have an immune response after being vaccinated. This is a sign that the vaccine is working and doing its job. You also may have no side effects, which is also okay.**

You may not notice any changes in how you feel after getting the shot. But it's also possible to feel a little "under the weather." This can happen after *any* vaccine.

After the COVID-19 vaccine, you may have:

- A sore arm where you got the shot
- A headache
- Chills
- Fever
- Tiredness

These side effects are not dangerous and are just a sign of your immune system doing its job. They are easily treatable with over-the-counter pain medicine and fever reducers and usually only last for a short period of time. If you or your child still don't feel well after two or three days, reach out to your health care provider.

**Question: Can the COVID-19 vaccine give you COVID?**

**Answer: The COVID-19 vaccine cannot give you COVID.**

None of the vaccines are made up of material that can cause the disease. In fact, the vaccine is your greatest protection against COVID-19. You may experience minor symptoms following your COVID-19 vaccine, including a sore arm, fever or chills. Vaccines safely increase your body's natural ability to fight the virus before the virus attacks you. And remember, millions of New Yorkers, Americans and people all over the world have received the vaccine already.

**Question: What about my personal information?**

**Answer: Your privacy and personal information are protected at all times.**

Nothing in the vaccine can be tracked – the protein your body makes cannot be tracked and it disappears after it finishes making you stronger. Personal information about your vaccination and health are protected at all times. We do not send any personal information to the CDC or ICE when vaccinations are given.

**Question: How can I be sure that the COVID-19 vaccines do not change my DNA?**

**Answer: The COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way.**

Both mRNA (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) and viral vector (Janssen/Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccines deliver instructions to our cells. However, the instructions never enter the nucleus of the cell, where DNA is located.

They tell our cells to start building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccine itself breaks down and falls apart in the body right away. As soon as this information is delivered to your cells, it gets removed, or clears. This means the vaccine breaks down and falls apart in your body right away – it will not linger.

**Question: What happens inside my body when I get a vaccine, like COVID-19?**

**Answer: Vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein. This protein, or piece of the protein, will trigger an immune response in your body.**

The process is sometimes called either a blueprint or instructions. The body uses this information to create a protection response to keep you safe from the virus. The vaccine itself then breaks down and falls apart in the body right away.

**Question: I don't understand how vaccines work. How do I know it's not harming my body?**

**Answer: Vaccines are instructions for your body's cells that teach your body to make an immune response.**

Vaccines cannot interact with -- or do anything to -- the DNA of your cells. Human cells break down and get rid of the vaccine ingredients soon after they use the instructions. The vaccine itself breaks down and falls apart in the body right away.

As soon as the information is delivered to your cells, the parts of the vaccine are excreted from your body and don't linger. This is what makes vaccines safe.

**Question: Do COVID-19 vaccines contain animal-based ingredients?**

**Answer: No, there are no animal-based ingredients in any of the COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States.**

The Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines contain no human or animal products, preservatives or adjuvants and utilize no ingredients of human or animal origin.